

Berkeley Psychology INSIGHT

Letter from the chair

Dear Alumni and Friends,

We made it back on campus this fall! Yes, some more than others, and in varying degrees, but walking into BWW and seeing a steady buzz of activity once again, masks and all, is a most heartening sight.

A special note of gratitude goes out to our graduate students who are serving as Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs) this semester – they have bravely adjusted back to teaching discussion sections in person. And from what I've heard from many undergraduates, it has been joyous to be back in the classroom and they are grateful to their GSIs and to campus for putting in place the policies and protocols that have made this possible.



Despite the ongoing pandemic, we have much to look forward to in the coming months — 2022 marks the [Psychology Department's 100th anniversary!](#) We will have a [virtual launch event](#) on Wednesday, December 8th, from 5-6:30 p.m. to showcase the full range of our department. The event will feature lightning talks from four of our current faculty who will describe some of the exciting research and findings coming out of their labs. And we'll also hear from one of our distinguished Emeritus faculty, as well as from rising stars among our graduate and undergraduate students. In addition to celebrating our department's history, the event will be a time for us to pause, reflect, and simply gather together as a community, as 2021 winds down and we gear up for the new year.

Challenges brought on by the pandemic continue for many – be it illness, stress, child care gaps, or social isolation. But the resilience of our faculty, staff, and students has continued to shine through. Staff Appreciation Week in October had a different flavor this year, as faculty and graduate students recognized all of the many small and giant efforts that staff have put in to help us all navigate the pandemic as smoothly as possible, and to enable us to focus on our teaching and research missions. All the while, our faculty and graduate students continued to win awards for their teaching, research, and mentoring.

As I look ahead into 2022, I am (cautiously) hopeful that we will have an even further “return to normal.” We have much work to do – in our classrooms, in our labs, and, ultimately, in society at large, doing our part to find ways to make the world safer, more equitable, more peaceful, and more sustainable.

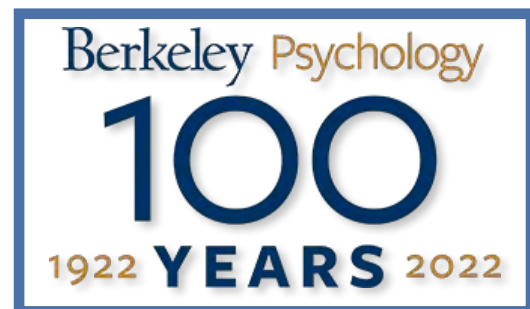
Best wishes for a healthy and productive end of the semester, and for a peaceful holiday season with loved ones. Look forward to reconnecting in 2022 – [our 100th year!](#)

Give to Psychology, [HERE](#)

Also please send us your stories and life updates — we feature alumni stories on our website and would love to hear from you!

And keep in touch with us via [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and our [Department website](#).

Serena Chen
Professor and Chair



Honors and Awards

FACULTY

Allison Harvey, professor of Psychology (in collaboration with professors **Anne Collins** and **Steve Hinshaw**), was awarded a grant from the [National Institute of Child Health and Human Development](#) to study the maintenance of behaviour change interventions for better sleep health in adolescent “night-owls”.

Christina Maslach, professor of Psychology Emerita, was included in the [Business Insider](#) annual list of 100 people transforming business through innovation, trendsetting, and addressing challenges.

Frank Solloway, adjunct professor of Psychology, has recently published a book titled [Darwin and His Bears](#). The book is a scientific fable, intended for adults and young readers, that closely tracks both scientific and historical fact in an effort to teach the underlying principles of evolutionary theory.

Kevin Weiner, assistant professor of Psychology, was awarded a [CAREER](#) award by the National Science Foundation to examine the function and cognitive relevance of uniquely human brain structures and to build freely available learning and teaching tools to disseminate his novel findings widely.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Alejandro Campero Oliart, first-year Social and Personality PhD student, was the recipient of the UC Berkeley [Chancellor’s Fellowship](#) and the [Hispanic Scholarship Fund](#) award to support his doctoral research with **Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton** and **Ozlem Ayduk**.



LISTEN TO OUR PSYCHOLOGY
FACULTY ON THE GO!

What’s in a mascot? Find out from **Arianne Eason**, on a recent episode from [The Edge](#).

Want to be happier? Learn from **Dacher Keltner**, and the [Science of Happiness](#) podcast.

How do you sleep? Improve yours by tuning in to **Matt Walker’s** [podcast](#) on all things sleep.

Marlen Diaz, first-year Clinical PhD student, was awarded the UC Berkeley [Chancellor’s Fellowship](#) to support her doctoral research with **Allison Harvey**.

Gaia Molinaro, first-year Cognition PhD student, was awarded the UC Berkeley [Regent’s Fellowship](#) to support doctoral research with **Anne Collins**.

Jefferson Ortega, first-year Cognitive Neuroscience PhD student, was awarded the [Eugene Cota-Robles Fellowship](#) to support doctoral research with **David Whitney**.

Patricia Porter, first-year Clinical PhD student, was awarded the [Berkeley Fellowship](#) to support doctoral research with **Stephen Hinshaw**.

Eli Susman, first-year Clinical PhD student, was awarded the [National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship](#) to support doctoral work with **Allison Harvey**.



Rebecca Zhu, fifth-year PhD student, is the recipient of an [Aga Khan](#) and [Jacobs](#) Foundations grant to conduct developmental research in Kenya. The grant funds [picture comprehension in infancy](#) and is a collaboration between local Kenyan scientists and several UC Berkeley faculty, including **Jan Engelmann** and **Alison Gopnik**.

News & Views

Learning about bio-mechanics from squirrels

Lucia Jacobs, professor of Psychology, recently published a cover article in [Science](#), which has been featured widely, including in [the New York Times](#), in which she and her team investigated how freely-moving squirrels learn to jump and land during challenging leaps.



Gender bias in academia

Nina Dronkers, Bob Knight, and **Joni Wallis**, professors of Psychology, were part of a monumental paper, published in [Neuron](#), that describes the multifaceted problem of gender bias in academia and proposes actionable solutions.



Adaptive technology for blind and visually impaired

Joshua Miele, alumnus of the Psychology department, won the prestigious [MacArthur Foundation fellowship](#) for designing innovative solutions for everyday problems blind and visually impaired people face when navigating physical environments and accessing digital information. Read more [here](#).



PSYCHOLOGY CELEBRATES 100 YEARS AS A DEPARTMENT

Psychology has been a part of Berkeley since the 1800s, but it wasn't until 1922 that our Psychology Department was officially established with 4 faculty members, no building, and only a few graduate students. Now, our collaborative and diverse department boasts **36 faculty members, over 100 PhD students, and around 1000 undergraduates**. We are home to 6 distinct yet integrated areas: clinical science, cognition, cognitive neuroscience, developmental, behavioral and systems neuroscience, and social and personality psychology, that all conduct award-winning and innovative research.

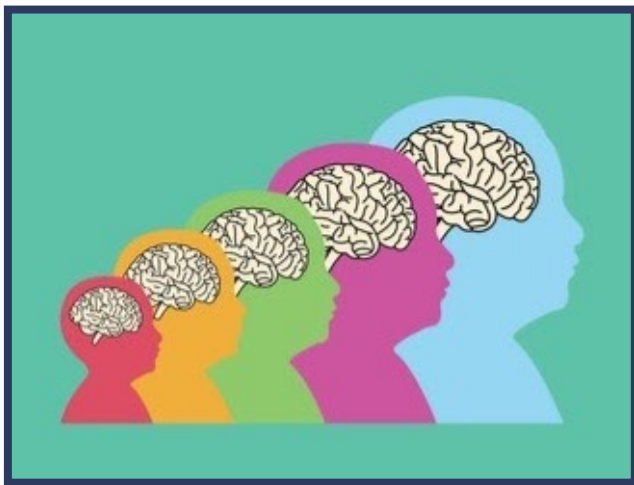
Our hard work in cultivating an exceptional learning and research environment bears out in consistent rankings that place our Psychology Department #1 in U.S. Surveys & Reports and in the top 5 Psychology departments across both national and international reports.

Please see our [official website](#) for upcoming events and additional information.

Publications

ADHD and BMI development

Previous research has shown a strong link between ADHD and obesity, yet it's still unknown when in development this occurs. In a recent longitudinal study, **Patricia Porter, Laura Henry, and Ashley Halkett** with **Stephen Hinshaw, PhD**, found that girls with ADHD, beginning in adolescence, increased in body mass index (BMI) more rapidly across development than those without ADHD. By adulthood, 40% of the women with ADHD met criteria for obesity compared to only 15% of those without ADHD. Although more research is needed, this suggests that girls with ADHD may benefit from health interventions in early adolescence.



Nature Communications

Adaptive brain development

Our understanding of the developing brain is predominantly from children within middle or high-income families. This prompts questions about how this work generalizes to understudied, low-income populations. In an attempt to fill this gap, **Monica E. Ellwood-Lowe** with **Silvia A. Bunge, PhD**, studied over 1000 children below the poverty line and found a pattern of brain connectivity during cognitive tasks that is directly oppositional to the common narrative. Their findings emphasize the need for diverse research participants and suggest that brain development is adaptive, depending on the external pressures children face.

RESEARCH DISCOVERIES



Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology

Neuroanatomical features of reasoning

As children develop, they learn to reason about the world around them. However, we are still learning how changes in the brain might scaffold the acquisition of these reasoning skills. Here **Willa Voorhies, Silvia Bunge, PhD, and Kevin Weiner, PhD** found a relationship between the structure of small, late developing neuroanatomical features known as tertiary sulci and reasoning skills in children and adolescents. This finding helps us better understand the link between brain development and cognition.



Nature Communications

Publications



Emotion

Determining replicability

How good is the evidence in the literature on scarcity? Although both narrative and quantitative approaches to answering this question exist, both approaches have significant drawbacks. In a recent publication current and former Berkeley students (**Stephen Antonoplis, Arianna Benedetti, PhD, Belinda Carrillo, Paul Connor, PhD, Monica Ellwood-Lowe, Ruthe Foushee, PhD, Rachel Jansen, PhD, Ryan Lundell-Creagh, Joseph Ocampo, and Gold Okafor**) proposed a novel solution: the empirical audit and review. To demonstrate the method, they replicated 20 studies on scarcity. Overall, only four of the studies were replicated, suggesting that more rigorous methods, such as the empirical audit and review, can shed light on the reliability of scarcity research.



Development Science

RESEARCH DISCOVERIES

Cross-cultural adaptive coping

Healthy coping strategies have been established as beneficial, yet little research has been done in Latinx communities. Given ongoing political strife and current cultural stressors, **Maria Monroy, Dacher Keltner, PhD, and Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton, PhD**, studied the effectiveness of coping with positive emotion in both immigrant farmworkers and ethnically diverse university students. In both populations, they found that as adaptive coping strategies increased, so did positive emotions and a general improvement in well-being. These findings illuminate the benefits of daily positive emotions during stressful situations for the Latinx community.



Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences

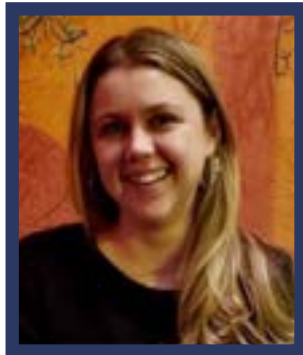
Solving the word gap

Not only *how* parents talk to a child, but *how much* they talk, matters. Differences in outcome across parents that spend less time talking to children has been termed the “word gap” and past research used parental characteristics, such as knowledge or personal beliefs, to explain the disparity. Across two studies, **Monica Ellwood-Lowe, Ruthe Foushee, PhD, and Mahesh Srinivasan, PhD** found preliminary evidence that structural inequity may be to blame: parents seem to talk less to their kids at times when they may be worried about finances. This suggests a more effective intervention for the “word gap” might be to simply provide more resources to parents and caregivers.

In our Department



Elena Leib



Willa Voorhies

DEPARTMENT INITIATIVES

A Course in Quantitative Methods & Coding

There is a long history of student led initiatives at Berkeley. As programming and data analysis skills become vital for much of psychology-related research and careers, Psychology graduate students recognized the need for practical training tailored specifically to students in the department. This led to the creation of a data analysis workshop for graduate students, by graduate students. The workshop, affectionately known as QuACK (Quantitative Analysis and Coding Knowledge), has become a department staple for first year graduate students. Now in its fifth year, what started as a small student led workshop has expanded into a for-credit graduate course. In response to high demand in the department, QuACK has also hosted a programming bootcamp for summer Research Assistants to equip them with the skills they need for research and beyond. Currently taught by **Elena Leib** and **Willa Voorhies**, QuACK provides practical programming skills for robust and reproducible science in an inclusive, welcoming, and supportive environment.

Creating a more diverse and equitable future

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee was formed in summer 2020 to create and maintain a department environment in which people from diverse backgrounds and experiences are represented, valued, and thrive. The committee, composed of faculty leaders **Mahesh Srinivasan** and **Arienne Easton**, seeks to ensure that the research, teaching, and service that our department undertakes engages diverse populations, gives voice to diverse perspectives, and addresses real-world social problems. Last year the committee reviewed the status of DEI in the department and drafted a [vision statement](#) in partnership with students, faculty, and staff, to reflect our commitment towards developing a “diverse psychological science.” During 2021-22 the committee will 1) engage throughout departmental areas and committees to integrate DEI goals, 2) critically evaluate how undergraduate curriculum incorporates DEI issues, and 3) adding content related to DEI to our website (e.g., to showcase existing relevant research and service).

Incoming PhD Students 2021



Back row, left to right: Oded Ritov, Colin Jacobs, Erika Roach, Patricia Porter, Alejandro Campero Oliart. Middle row, left to right: Jefferson Ortega, Sophie Regan, Chris Gys, Eli Susman, Tenzin Desel. Front row, left to right: My Dao, Gaia Molinaro, Marlen Diaz. Not pictured: Sarah Stolp

Meet the Psychology department's 2021 PhD student cohort!

This year's cohort brings students to our department with diverse academic backgrounds, research interests, and ethnicities. Our newest students arrived in August from Italy, Bolivia, New Zealand, Tibet, India, Dominican Republic, and across the United States. Their academic backgrounds span education in Hispanic studies and business administration to physics. They join the program ready to perform research into computational modeling of human learning, developing new interventions through contemplative practices like mindfulness, investigating bilingual development in US immigrant youth, and studying the intersectionality of race and social class. Be on the lookout for more to come from our 2021-22 PhD scholars!

Editor-in-Chief, Director of Design: Juliana Chase

Managing Editor: Willa Voorhies

Writers and Contributors: Patricia Porter, Jefferson Ortega, Gaia Molinaro, My Dao

Faculty Editor: Kevin Weiner, PhD

Thanks to Christina Merrick, PhD for her lasting contribution to our newsletter.

Sign up for our Insight Newsletter to stay up to date with Berkeley Psychology and be sure to follow us on Twitter and Facebook for real-time updates.

Charter Hill Society for Psychology

The Charter Hill Society is a community of alumni dedicated to supporting UC Berkeley Psychology, its students and faculty, and each other. Members will be invited to special programming for Psychology as well as to events with Charter Hill members from around the College. Recent lectures and events have featured Nobel laureates and leading figures in Psychology and Neuroscience.

Charter Hill members make a three-year pledge to the Psychology Department of \$1,000 or more per year. Gifts directly support the students and faculty of Berkeley Psychology.

To become a member of the Charter Hill Society, make a three-year recurring commitment [here](#). (One-time gifts can also be made.)

**For more information or questions, contact Anya Essiounina:
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